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News

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Secretary LaHood Applauds Georgia Governor for Signing Law Banning Texting While Driving *New Law Also Prohibits Cell Phone Use by Teen Drivers*

WASHINGTON - U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today commended Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue for signing an anti-texting-while-driving bill into law for all drivers in his state. As the 28th state to pass a texting ban, Georgia has taken the country another step closer to a nationwide prohibition on texting while driving. The law also forbids cell phone use for young drivers with a provisional license.

“Motorists traveling on Georgia’s roads will be safer as a result of this new law. Distracted driving is a hazardous and deadly practice that needs to end,” Secretary LaHood said. “It’s time for Americans to follow Georgia’s lead and just put their devices down. Texting while driving is just too risky,” he added.

The new Georgia primary law, which is effective July 1, prohibits drivers of all ages from texting while driving. Young drivers with provisional licenses are banned from talking on cell phones, as well as texting while behind the wheel. The *Caleb Sorohan Act for Saving Lives by Preventing Texting While Driving* was passed last Friday. It’s in memory of Caleb Sorohan, an 18 year-old high school student who died in a car accident when he lost control of his vehicle while texting. Violators can face a penalty of \$150 and 1 point against their driver’s license.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has developed sample legislation that states can use as a starting point to craft measures to ban texting. The sample bill is patterned after President Obama's October 1, 2009, Executive Order prohibiting federal employees from texting while operating government-owned vehicles and equipment. Last year, more than 200 distracted driving bills were under consideration by state legislatures, and the pace has increased this year.

Research compiled by NHTSA attributed an estimated 6,000 deaths and half-a-million injuries to distracted driving in 2008 alone. Recently, Secretary LaHood launched pilot programs in New York and Connecticut as part of a “Phone in One Hand. Ticket in the Other.” campaign to study whether increased enforcement and public awareness can reduce distracted driving behavior.

For more information on distracted driving and the Department of Transportation's work, visit www.distraction.gov.